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LOYOLA COLLEGE

It counted more to be an Honours graduate than a passman, but St Joseph's had no such course, so I had to look to Madras. Having had some grounding in maths and the physical sciences, albeit rudimentary in retrospect, I thought it time to change to the social sciences, so I plumped for economics and political science. I applied for a seat in the three best colleges in Madras and was accepted by all of them. This was greatly in contrast to the situation today, when all but the best students have to join the pack in an anxious rush from one college to another, seeking a place - sometimes any place - to do a degree. My difficulty lay in deciding which to choose. Presidency, a government institution founded in the last century, had been the premier college in the 1920s when my two eldest brothers had done their Honours there, but as with most government institutions by my time, its standards had fallen. Christian had a high reputation and offered a relaxed ambience in the Oxbridge tradition at its new campus at Tambaram, then fifteen miles south of the city. (Joyce was shortly to go there for her degree prior to doing her teacher's training, and was followed twenty four years later by our first son John for his year's "pre-Uni" before doing another five for his Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology closer by.) But being assured by everyone that the academic excellence and higher discipline maintained by the Jesuits would serve me best, it was Loyola that I chose. As I was a Catholic I was accepted at once and given one of the limited number of rooms in the campus hostel in a block nearest the chapel.

I packed my hold-all, my tin toilet-box and my father's old steel trunk that I had nearly lost on my trip to Assam, and set off for Madras in June 1939. I reported to Fr Saulier, the hostel warden, a dear and understanding old priest who, once he was sure I was to be

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found studying in my room six nights a week, turned a blind eye to my invariable late return on Saturday nights after seeing Joyce home from the pictures. My room was in the block nearest to the chapel, which was actually a church, the Church of Christ the King. It attracted most of the Catholics who lived in the vicinity, especially when they knew that our Principal, Fr Murphy, was to speak. He was renowned throughout Madras for his felicitous sermons - direct, pithy and human, delivered with perfect diction and never exceeding fifteen minutes. I could not have had a finer Principal during my three years at Loyola, and I still treasure the final certificate he gave me, which counted for much at my interview for the Indian Police.

Chapel was, of course, an important part of Catholic hostel life. There was mass every morning, benediction on Sundays, and all the usual devotions appropriate to the church calendar. I led the prayers occasionally and even did my turn serving at mass, a task I knew nothing about, but accomplished by mumbling something that sounded like Latin, while looking out of the corner of my eye at my fellow-server for cues to the business. I loved singing, and was soon supporting the bass section of the chapel choir conducted by Fr Varin, an accomplished musician and choir-master, who organised more than one choral mass in which Catholic students from all over Madras took part. Our Spiritual Director was Fr Leigh, an elderly English priest who clearly saw my interest in Darwin, Marx, Wells and Huxley as the beginnings of deviation, if not of heresy, schism and unbelief. He also took us in English, which we did for just a year, but his real interest was snakes. He milked vipers for their poison and kept two pythons in a cage outside the rectory. Those of us who could stomach the sight were allowed to see him toss a live rabbit into the cage where it would cower for a while before the snake slithered towards it and then pounced, squeezing it to death before swallowing it.

The head of my faculty was Fr Basenach ("Bazzy" to all his students). He was a German Jesuit who had read economics at Oxford and who taught it through discussion rather than lectures. He had a stern exterior, with bushy eye-brows and penetrating blue eyes

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which gave him a forbidding look - until he smiled, when his face would light up like a little child's. Keynes' theory of money, interest and employment, which formed the basis of the American New Deal and the recovery from the Great Depression, dominated economics by then, and Bazzy left us to pursue its basics on our own, using the class only to discuss and refine some aspect of this comparatively new thinking. He always encouraged an opposing view, of which I had one or two, and if we had not resolved the matter by the time class was over, he would walk over to my room in the evening to resume the discussion. It was the kind of gesture one appreciated.

We did not have a semester system. Instead, we read all our subjects over the entire three-year course. It was quite a full one, comprising general economics, banking and currency, public finance, economic history, Indian economics and rural economics. Political science comprised general theory, political history, political philosophy and constitutional politics, the last of which interested me most. Our one year of English was more by way of consolidation for those students whose mother-tongue was some other language, and ended with only an internal examination. There was no second language for Honours students, but since I had the ICS in view, for which there would be a compulsory paper in an Indian language, I took to studying Hindi under a private tutor. I paid him by obtaining the same scholarship that had helped to see Ralph through his coaching in England, but which had ceased to be tenable there since Indians could no longer go to London to do the examination. And though I was not able to attain anything like the standard required for the entrance examination, and so finally did not even try, the scholarship provided some relief to Doreen and Pat who were seeing me through this last stage of my education. (I repaid it in small but regular installments after I got into service.)

Not having a semester system entailed swotting really hard at the end of my three-year course for the seven papers that comprised the final university examination. The examination itself, thanks to the presence of a Japanese aircraft-carrier off Madras which it later bombed, was held at Bangalore. It was rushed through at the rate of

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two papers a day, which put us under some strain, so to keep going I sucked on glucose tablets at each session. That I got a first was greatly due to Loyola's capable lay-staff, Indians all, who were every bit as brilliant as the Jesuits themselves. Before guiding us through the higher reaches of our subjects, they made sure that we had a thorough grounding in fundamentals, resorting at times even to a kind of catechism. I remember being asked to define a term in economics by our professor, Dr Govindaraj, who, no sooner had he heard the first words of my reply, said, "Sit down, I see you know it". Nor, thanks to young Dr Appadurai, our politics professor who took nothing for granted, could I have said - as decades later I was surprised to hear an eminent Professor of political science at the Australian National University say - that there was no difference between a federation and a confederation. (The matter was of some importance, for one or the other term was to form part of the title of a paper I was working on in conjunction with an officer from the Australian Society of Criminology for publication in a learned journal abroad, and I certainly had no wish to appear ill-informed.)

Being catechised or encouraged to take notes in class might have seemed to justify the common dig that Loyola spoon-fed its students, but this took no account of the detailed library work or the extensive assignments we had to undertake on our own. Assignments were graded on a scale of one to ten, and getting even a six at the niggardly hands of our mentors was reckoned to be the equivalent of a first. When I once got a seven for an effort that pleased even me, some of my classmates turned up at my room demanding to read it. I on my part must confess to also having picked the brains of my smarter colleagues to good effect. Such individual effort and mutual help no doubt explained why Loyola men regularly ranked so high in the university and public service examinations.

Though my class subjects naturally had prior call on my time, for nothing but a high first would have guaranteed my success at an all-India competitive examination, they were far from being my only reading. Candidates were expected to have a wide general knowledge, a thorough acquaintance with current affairs, and a

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degree of understanding that came from a broad world-view. So even though my particular subjects gave me a fairly sound base to build upon, I endeavoured to supplement them with wider readings in a variety of fields, predominantly the social and the natural sciences. Loyola had an excellent library for my use in these fields, but of equal importance was the easy access I had to minds that matched the finest anywhere. The south Indian has few rivals in intelligence, diligence and love of learning, and this made my discussions with my mentors and colleagues both a pleasure and a gain. An excellent source for supplementary reading was THE HINDU, the country's foremost daily, which continuously featured thoughtful articles, leaders and editorials on a wide variety of subjects, all of them in model English. All this provided excellent furniture for my maturing mind.

But not all my reading was serious. Paper-backs were popular by then, and I could buy an Agatha Christie for less than a rupee. I had done with Edgar Wallace and "Sapper" while still in school, and though I continued to enjoy the smooth, heroic exploits of Simon Templar, it was to the current spate of mystery yarns that I turned for lighter reading. They may not have done much for me in my police career, but they certainly gave me the diversion I needed from my numerous other activities. These included part-time soldiering in the University Training Corps in which, besides rising to the proud rank of corporal, I won the prize for the best rifle shot in the company; acting, debating and elocution in which, too, prizes came my way, among them the annual Kasturi Ranga cup offered by THE HINDU for extempore speaking; organising socials, picnics and concerts; and making the college First XI in cricket in which, thanks to my bad wrist, I bowled better than I batted.

It was at Loyola, too, that I reached the culmination - and the end - of my athletic career. I wore my university colours at more than one meet, the most important being the Madras State Olympics in which, as already mentioned, I won the javelin throw (by default). My college championship in my last year was won on the same five events that had gained me the Victor Ludorum in school: the high,

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long, and triple jumps, the 200 meters, and a throw, but this time with the javelin and not the school cricket ball. But that day in 1942 spelt the end of my athletics, for while coaching the losing team in tug-of-war, and walking backwards while still stupidly wearing my spikes, I tripped over a tussock and fell, severely wrenching my right knee. I limped in pain to the dais the seven times my name was called (there was also a medal for the relay besides my championship cup to collect), then went to my room to lie down and be tended by the college doctor. The next day my knee was much more painful and swollen, but worse was my disappointment - and Loyola's - for it was the day of the inter-collegiate meet, the climax of the athletics year, at which I had been expected to do well. I was unable to leave my bed even to attend, let alone take part, and when our team returned at the end of the day, it was to give me the bitter news that we had lost to Christian by a single point.

The water on my knee took some time to subside, and even after that I could not bend my leg without pain. It was an awkward predicament, for apart from not being able to ride a cycle, I had to cope with squatting over the Indian-type latrines which were all that the hostel had to offer then. When my knee showed no signs of healing, I saw the Head of Orthopaedics at the General Hospital. He put his finger on the trouble at once. It seemed that when the fluid disappeared, it left behind some fibrous matter, and it was this that was hampering full flexure. On my agreeing to an operation, he put me under for a few seconds with a whiff of gas, then bent my knee sharply, breaking the offending fibres. I came to, dreaming that I was on the track and begging my PT instructor not to make me run, for I could not stand the pain. And then I recognised the face of a friend bending over me and telling me it was all over - while holding a rosary over my head! I was soon able to cycle again, but my only other outdoor activity thereafter was cricket, for which I had to wear a knee-support. Later, while in service, I took to long, brisk walks in both headquarters and camps, and rode a horse whenever I could. I remained free of trouble for the next forty years, but at sixty and retired in Australia, I foolishly helped to lay a kitchen floor which involved excessive and unwonted genuflection. This gave me a bad

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case of housemaid's knee, an ailment which Canberra's severe winters have served to worsen.

I gave up most of my extra-curricula activities in my final year in order to devote time to study. I even quit the hostel with its many distractions to move into a quiet boarding-house run by a Mrs. Hargreaves. There I shared a room with Tom Axford, a teacher who had returned to college at the age of forty to get a degree in science. He was a good and steadying influence, which I no doubt needed at times, for I found - not quite by accident - that Joyce was another boarder at the house, and still very much my sweetheart! She was doing her degree at Christian, which she had to reach by train every day, and was one of the earliest women students at what till then had been an exclusively men's college. Her presence did not distract me too much, for after much late-night study, with wet towels wrapped around our heads and many a cup of coffee to keep us awake, both Tom and I ended up with first class degrees. When I told my mother I had ranked sixth in the Presidency, she congratulated me, but added, "You could have come first"!

Hostel life at Loyola was the last but one step in my mental transition as an Indian, the completion coming soon after in my early years of service. Madras was the capital of a huge province comprising large divisions of people, each in their millions, speaking four major languages, belonging to a bewildering number of castes, and possessing different tastes in food. Though there were colleges at regional centers like Madura, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore, Palghat and Mangalore, some of which we visited to take part in inter-collegiate meets and matches, the top ones in most disciplines were to be found at Madras. Students from all over the province, attracted by their hostels, brought with them their different tongues and palates. Tamil of a sort I knew, and the sounds of Telugu came echoing back to me from an earlier day, but here for the first time I heard Malayalam spoken. I felt ashamed at my paltry knowledge of Tamil but had little incentive to improve it, for I was busy studying Hindi on my own, and English was the lingua franca of the campus and, of course, our medium of instruction. It remains largely so

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today, even though it is more than forty five years since they reorganised the province (and the country) into linguistic states, renamed the area Tamil Nadu, and started to give Tamil every encouragement to replace English.

The number of castes on the campus, many of whose names I heard for the first time, surprised me. There were Nairs, Thiya and Namboodris from Malabar; Saraswats, Gowda Saraswats, Billavas and Bunts from Karnataka; Mudaliars, Nadars, Gounders and Thevars from Tamil Nadu; and Reddys, Raos and Naidus from Andhra Pradesh; and not a few other castes, high and low, from all over the province. Though caste rivalries, often bitter and violent, had always been endemic in the villages, and developed openly in many urban parts of the country after independence, they were not apparent on the campus in my time. This was probably because the fewer numbers then competing for university places produced a more civil type of student, and also because of the generally firmer control exercised by the administration before independence, supplemented in colleges such as ours by the strict discipline of the missions that ran them.

Even so, it was a liberal atmosphere that we enjoyed, and one that was enhanced in a special way by the variety of messes that existed to cater for the diversity of palates. The Anglo-Indians, joined by a few other westernised Indians, had their “European” mess where there was no restriction on diet. The Cosmopolitan mess next door was similar to ours, except that it served neither beef nor pork. Crockery and cutlery were used in both, whereas elsewhere the members ate with their hands. Brahmins and other “observers” had their own vegetarian sections in which, as in all strict organisations, there were the inevitable backsliders. These recusants, succumbing to the delicious smells that came from our kitchen, would put scruples aside and join us for a share of our Sunday lunch of curried chicken, mutton *biryani* or pilau, and *korma*. Completing the tally were one or two other messes that catered to regional tastes, notably the Andhra, whose members could indulge their fondness for curries so hot that they brought profuse perspiration to the brow. In

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addition, there was a hostel cafe from which one could get vegetarian snacks or a full afternoon meal, the latter mainly for the convenience of day-scholars who did not go home for lunch.

Each mess was run by an elected committee, of which I happened to be the President of ours. In this capacity I would be invited by other messes to dine on special occasions such as their local feast-days, or to judge one of their periodic gourmand competitions. These involved simply eating as many *idlis* (rice cakes) as the competitor possibly could, the winner being the one who ate the most. As there was no time limit, and no time off to empty oneself during a sitting, the consequences did not always accord with the best of table etiquette! Withal, as a result of such inter-dining, I developed a connoisseur's taste for south Indian food that remains with me till today. In these and other ways did I round off my transition, without completely eschewing my Anglo-Indian culture. I was quite at ease eating off a leaf with my hand - always the right, as is the Indian custom, for the left was reserved for baser purposes. (In my case the use of tissue was always followed by water, a sequence I whimsically like to regard as a symbol of my mixed descent.) I learnt not to offer or receive anything with my left hand or proffer something that had touched my lips, and to pour rather than sip water from a tumbler that others might have to use before it was washed. By such adjustments, big and small, but more particularly by the change in attitude of mind behind them, I became what I heard described as a good all-Indian.

I came to feel at ease in any company, at any table, in any home, and in any part of the country. This sense of the cosmopolitan was enhanced by the fact that I spoke the only effective all-India language, English, that existed then - and still does. It is not just the preference of the urban, monied elite. The demand for entry to English-medium schools all over the country continues unabated and seems insatiable. Despite the encouragement of Hindi for over two generations, English has held its place, kept the country effectively together in the face of fissiparous forces, and has generally served India well. Much of the communication at higher levels in fields that

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are vital to the country's progress still takes place in English, as do proceedings at national conferences and in learned journals. The medium of instruction in science and technology at most national and state institutions of higher learning and at national and regional training institutions still remains English; foreign delegations communicate with their Indian counterparts in that language; and correspondence abroad and internally between states is invariably accompanied by English translations. In such a milieu, it was easy for me to become relaxed and tolerant in outlook, friendly with everyone except professional quarries and political foes, and free of local loyalties, whether of caste, creed or kind. This last was a happy position for an Indian policeman to be in, continually exposed as he was to the public gaze and confronted all too often by parochial forces that could have affected fair and just decisions. It enabled me to act firmly in the face of untoward pressures and gained for me an ease of conscience (if not always peace of mind) and the sustained confidence of all those who happened to have dealings with me.

Yet I could not entirely rid myself of the feeling, deep down, that I was Anglo-Indian in a special way. My early upbringing and pride in being one was too deeply ingrained for it to have been fully purged, nor did it need to be, provided it was not exclusive, disruptive or aggressive. For pride in one's special self is nothing to be ashamed of, especially in a country where members of every community, religious, linguistic or regional, were acutely aware of their separate identities. I on my part had a further reason for this feeling. Even if I had not come from a community that had been brought up to feel separate from other Indians, members of the public and especially my subordinates often made me aware, directly or indirectly, that in their eyes I was, in a communal sense, someone different. In a markedly caste-conscious society, I clearly had no caste status to set me in one camp or other, and as for rank, I had long realised that high office was a heady and dangerous thing, and so took care never to let it keep me aloof, particularly from my subordinates. As a consequence, I came to sense an all-round satisfaction with my openness and accessibility, and more particularly with the fairness of my disposals in cases involving caste

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or community, all of which was associated by my superiors, from the Governor downwards, at least partially with the fact that I was an Anglo-Indian. This personal regard for my community, and the trust in my administration it gave rise to, was something I was always subtly aware of.

By the time I was finally done with college in Madras and returned home in 1942, Bangalore cantonment had lost some of its distinctive Anglo-Indian air and had become much more cosmopolitan. It was full of troops of all sorts, Indian, British and American, the latter mainly air force lads who brought a care-free, live-for-the-day attitude that accorded well with our own culture. They were westerners who spoke not just our language but our very idiom, shared our entertainments, tastes and ways of thinking, and were as much at home with us as we were with them. They thronged our streets, our cinemas and our places of amusement, crowding our social institutes and dancing till past midnight five times a week on our jam-packed floors. My mother, with her own four sons in mind, developed a soft corner for these young men, so far away from their homes, and made the unusual gesture of asking some of them over. I say unusual, for before the war we had not encouraged soldiers in our homes. And although by now we had given up such snobbish aloofness, we were still not able to include the Indian sepoy in our circle for reasons of language and diet, - and, let me say it, status. It is something I feel sad about now, after having spent a lifetime in charge of similar ranks in the police, but class, language and conditioning can prove insurmountable.

We met a few British and Indian army officers, some of them Cyril's colleagues who had not yet gone to war. But of all the army men we met, the Americans, with their more relaxed and democratic ways, were the easiest to entertain. Later, when in service, I invited an American sergeant to spend some time with me in Erode, my first independent charge, to see something of mofussil India. It was a novel experience for him to see how a district officer lived, particularly in camp, complete with cook, orderlies, linen and tableware, the more so as when I first mentioned camp, he had had

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visions of having to hunt or fish for our dinner and to cook it ourselves over an open fire! As everywhere else, apparently, the Americans with their more generous pay and supplies of gifts were preferred by the girls to other soldiers. One American openly installed a pretty Anglo-Indian in a rented cottage, an affair that made me feel ashamed. But I was much more humiliated to see another girl, dressed in a frock and obviously Anglo-Indian, lying on a rock in Cubbon Park and being passionately kissed by a soldier in full view of a gaping crowd. Such blatant behaviour shocked me and others in our prudish town, until we came to realise that, like higher prices, food shortages, crowded pavements and congested traffic, it was all part of the changed conditions that war brought.

But it was not all bad. We made some good friends, one or two of them homely lads who were glad of our own simple hospitality. They introduced us to pocket-books, a most sensible innovation for soldiers in the field, but soon to be displayed by the hundreds on the pavements of Brigade Road. We had visiting entertainers like George Formby, the British comedian who, to quote himself, had “a face like a horse and teeth like tomb-stones”, besides a large repertoire of slightly risqué songs. And for me, there was memorable music, broadcast from Ceylon on the American forces own radio station. I still cannot hear tunes like “Star Dust”, “In the Mood” or “Blues in the Night” without a pang of acute nostalgia. There was occasional sadness too, as when some pilot we knew dipped his wings over South Parade as he made off for the war in the east, only to disappear for ever (as did Glenn Miller over the English Channel at about that time).

The Japanese, too, were busy in the Bay of Bengal soon after they had seized the Andaman Islands, the only bit of Indian territory they succeeded in holding till the war's end. They dropped a few bombs on Madras, causing some of its population to depart in panic, and we in Bangalore were asked if we could spare accommodation for possible evacuees. But as it soon became clear that the Japs had been merely demonstrating off the coast, these preparations became unnecessary. So too were the slit-trenches we had been advised to

dig as air-raid shelters. We dug ours under the shade of a guava tree in front of the house, deep enough to sit in and covered with bamboo rafters, palm matting and a thin layer of soil, and hoped it would suffice. Once, on hearing the warning siren go, we hurried to take cover in it. My mother, thoughtful as ever, quickly gathered a kettle and stove which she brought along to make tea in case the wait proved long, and was followed more leisurely (to her annoyance) by Margaret's husband who had dallied, just as thoughtfully, to collect our pith hats! We settled down on some cushions, and were apparently so well insulated that we did not hear the "All Clear". When we failed to emerge after a long time, our neighbour Mrs. Gibbs came out to look for us - only to peer down and inform us it had all been a practice! We had somehow missed the earlier announcement to that effect, and emerged shame-faced but laughing over our one and only experience of an "air raid".

I was out of college by this, and studying for my public service examinations. Despite my deficiency in Hindi, I still thought I might give the ICS a try. Besides an Indian language, the examination consisted of compulsory papers in English, general knowledge and an essay of a high standard, plus of course the subjects I had taken for my Honours, all of which except Hindi I knew I could handle. I revised them all, with no great confidence in the outcome because of my poor Hindi, so as the main shot in my locker, I concentrated on the Indian Police, which did not include a test in an Indian language. But it did include, besides papers in my Honours subjects, tests in three others not prescribed for the ICS. These were mathematics, geography and Indian history, all of Intermediate standard which I had ceased studying years before. I had to go back to my Intermediate maths, which was not too difficult, and to my school geography and history, which taxed me rather more, for I had left these off at Middle School. Happily, Edward Devonport, our school geography master, was still around and coached me to a passable standard. For a broad outline of Indian history I went back to my middle-school text book written by Gense, a Jesuit and Fellow of the Bombay University. I filled it in with readings from Vincent Smith's Oxford History of India - to good effect, as it transpired.

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Despite the distractions of war-time Bangalore, I seem to have studied well, for though I finally baulked at the ICS (with only slight regret in hindsight), I did really well in the IP. Of the hundreds who sat, I came first in the country, thus obtaining seniority over all others in my year. Altogether, I got over 150 marks more than the next man, a margin that would be considered exceptional today. Much of this came from my interview, in which I scored 380 out of 400. I also came first in general knowledge, essay, English, political science and, to my surprise, Indian history, which I still continue to read.

Besides the four vacancies to be filled that year, four more were reserved for Indians returning from the armed forces after the war. Another eight were similarly reserved for Britishers who were also to be selected when peace permitted a return to the normal ratio of one European to every Indian recruited. In the event, our batch of four proved to be the very last to enter the IP, as were our contemporaries in the ICS. For though independence was still five years away, the writing was already on the wall, and it was decided to cease recruitment to the imperial services. Of the four vacancies immediately available in my year, one was in the Punjab, one in Assam, and two in Madras. Of the latter, one was to be filled on merit, and the second reserved for a Harijan (Untouchable) under the scheme of reservation for minorities. If no suitable Harijan was forthcoming, that vacancy, too, was to be filled on merit. And since this indeed became the case, I was happy to see it go to my old collegemate Sankaran Nair, who had ranked second in the country. Shunks thereafter humorously described himself as the Harijan entrant, the joke being that as a high-caste Nair, he was just one rung lower than a Brahmin! He filled the post with great distinction, ending up as head of India's external intelligence agency, and later as our High Commissioner in Singapore. We passed the medicals without a hitch, and so, on 1 May 1943, I entered the Police Training College at Vellore, taking leave of my youth to start a man's career.

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